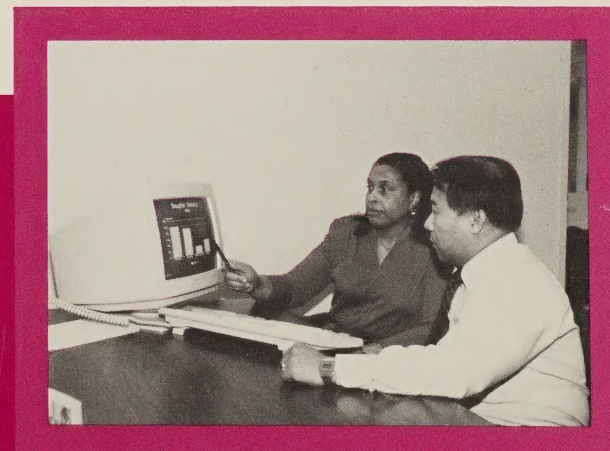
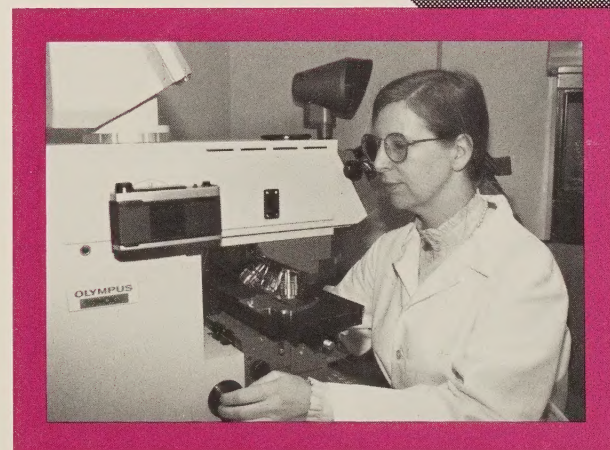
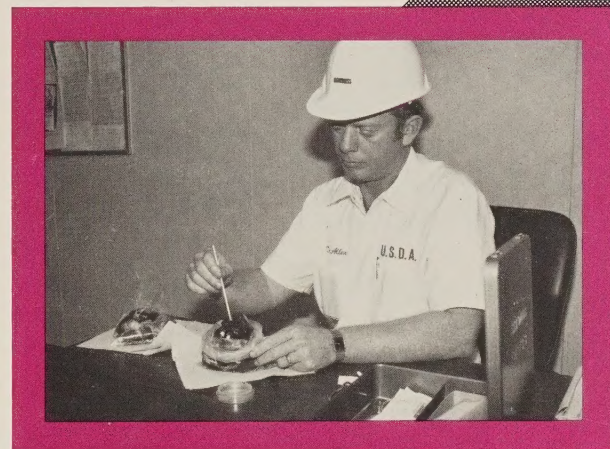
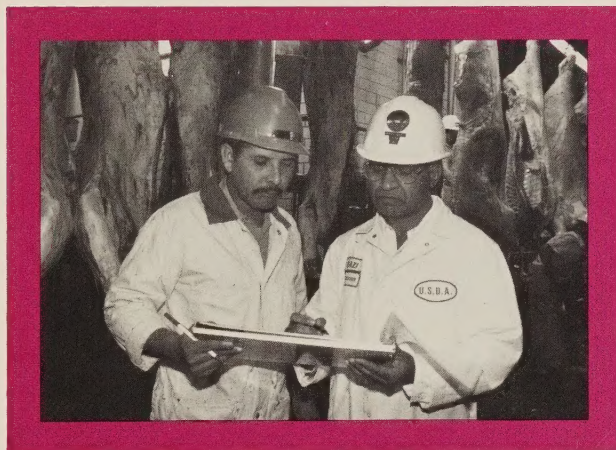


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Career Planning Guide for Veterinary Medical Officers



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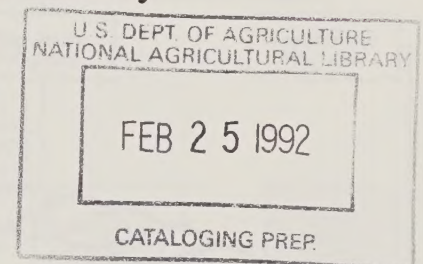
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Quality Policy

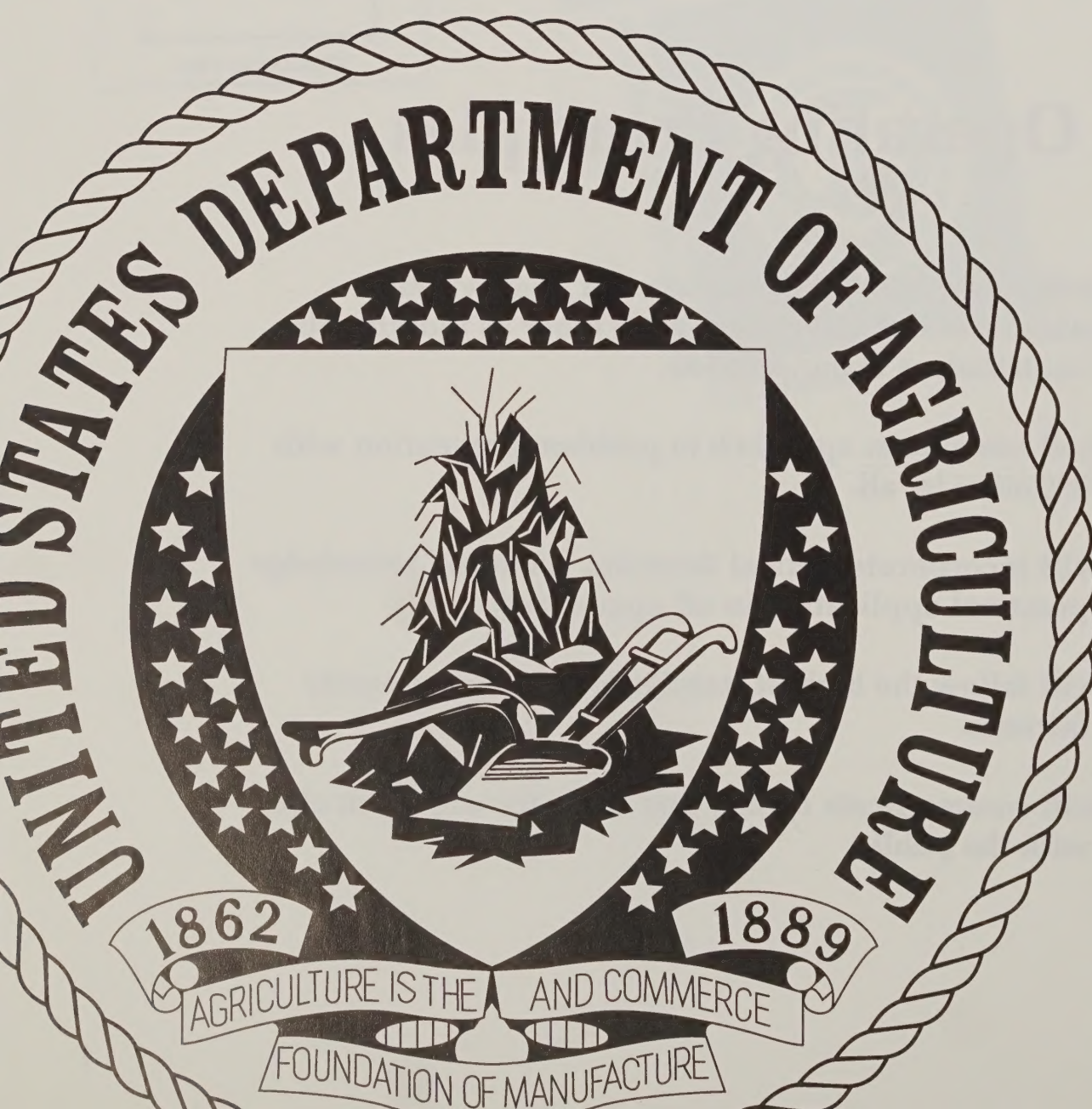
FSIS is a science-based consumer protection agency, pledged to ensure the public receives only safe, wholesome and accurately labeled meat and poultry products. We will be uncompromising in our drive to achieve quality, reward excellence and continuously improve all that we do.



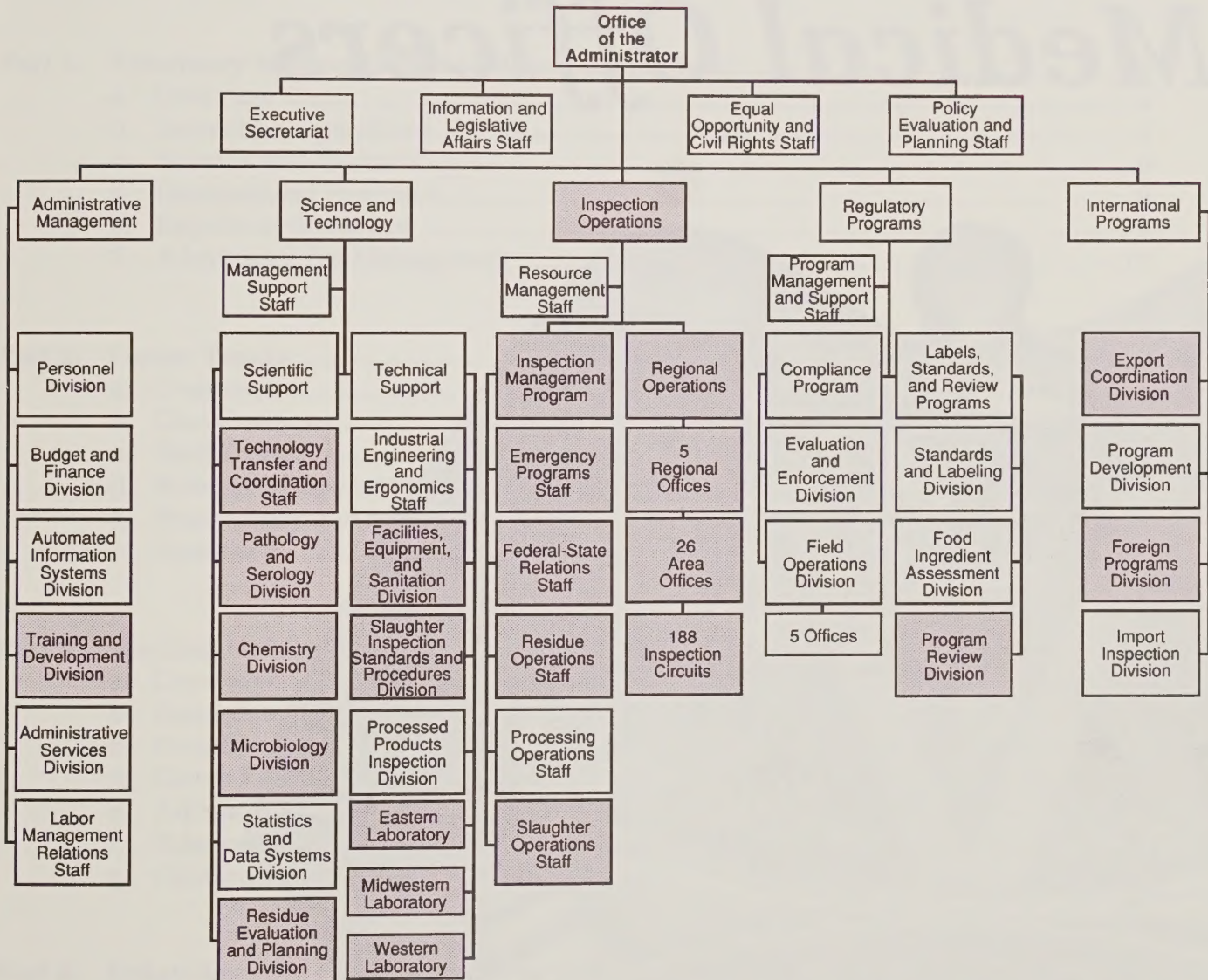
Operating Principles

1. We will recognize that people are the Agency's most valuable resource and respect each other as individuals and contributors to our mission.
2. We will use a team approach to problem prevention with participation by all.
3. We will incorporate critical thinking, scientific knowledge and practical application in all operations.
4. We will follow the highest standards of integrity, equity and fairness.
5. We will communicate openly and honestly with each other and with the public.

Food Safety and Inspection Service

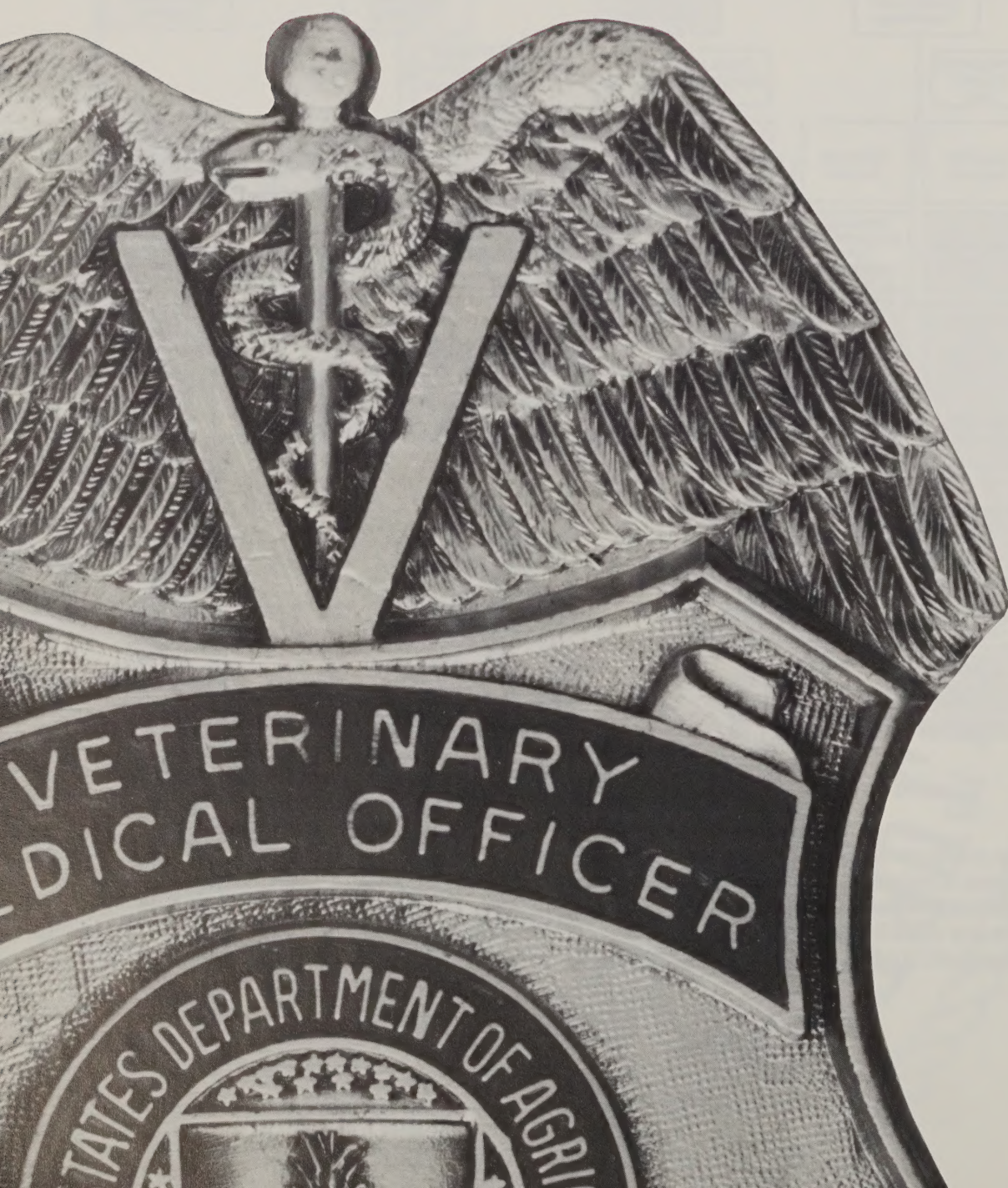


Organizational Structure



- Staffs that have positions classified under the Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) series. Please note that other positions throughout the organization may not be classified as VMO (701) positions but may be filled by individuals with veterinary backgrounds. In this guide, the term VMO refers to individuals whose positions are classified in the 701 series. The term veterinarian refers to employees with a veterinary background but whose jobs may be classified under another series.

Career Planning Guide for Veterinary Medical Officers



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Dear Colleagues:

During my visits to different locations throughout the Agency, Veterinary Medical Officers (VMO's) frequently ask, "What are the secrets to getting ahead in FSIS?" There certainly are no "secrets." But there are definitely specific things that VMO's have done over the years that have helped them advance in the organization.

This is a good time for those of you interested in promotion opportunities to begin planning for the future. Approximately one third of our veterinarians at the GM-13 level and almost half of our veterinarians at the GM-14 level will be eligible to retire over the next four years. We will need good candidates to replace them.

The following pages identify career opportunities in FSIS for VMO's and provide advice from senior executives and others on how to progress in the Agency. It is unlikely that any one person could obtain all of the various kinds of experience and training discussed in this guide. Nor are these experiences a guarantee of success. However, I am confident that those of you who take advantage of the advice provided certainly will be better candidates for promotion.

I would like to make two important points. First, you should recognize that as you progress up the management ladder as a VMO GS-701, the technical skills associated with the series carry less weight than management skills. Please keep this in mind as you choose training and other activities to develop your skills.

Second, keep in mind that higher level management positions in FSIS may not be classified in the GS-701 series and may or may not be filled by individuals with veterinary backgrounds. Three examples of positions within FSIS that are not classified as VMO positions but are currently filled by individuals with veterinary backgrounds are the Deputy Administrator for Science, the Assistant Deputy Administrator for International Programs and the Director of the Program Review Division. I fall into this category as well. On the other hand, a number of positions, such as the Deputy Administrator for International Programs and the Deputy Administrator for Regulatory Programs, are filled by individuals with highly developed public administration skills, but without veterinary backgrounds.

I urge you to keep this in mind because by setting your sights only on promotion opportunities within the VMO series you may be ignoring other opportunities to serve the Agency and advance. Don't underestimate the valuable perspective our veterinary training and experience gives us on the Agency mission. At the same time, recognize that many high-level positions in the Agency are filled by individuals with other than veterinary backgrounds. Our professional balance is vitally important to our overall success as a public health agency.

I wish you every success in your career and I hope you will take advantage of the valuable information in this guide to help you plan your success.

Administrator, FSIS

*Part 1: Veterinary
Medical Officers*



Where are the Jobs?

Overview

F SIS employs over 1,300 GS-701 Veterinary Medical Officers (VMO's)—more than any other organization in the world. While this guide is devoted to employees classified as VMO's, career planners should remember that FSIS employs veterinarians in other series such as Food Technologist (GS-1382), Program Manager (GS-340) and Program Analysis Officer or Program Analyst (GS-343).

Most VMO's work in meat and poultry slaughter plants as resident experts in pathology, parasitology, and epidemiology. They also supervise food inspectors in slaughter and processing plants.

Although most VMO's work in plants, a number of positions are available in laboratories and in office settings. For instance, positions are available for VMO's interested in pathology, designing new inspection methods, or instructing other inspection personnel. There are also positions involved with ensuring the safety of meat and poultry products exported by foreign countries to the United States.

New VMO's are usually hired at the GS-9 or GS-11 level, or, in a few instances, at the GS-12 level. Most positions at the GS-12 level and above are filled through the internal merit promotion program. Once hired, advancement opportunities are quite good because of the large number and geographic dispersion of VMO positions. The following provides a quick reference to the grade distribution and salary of GS-701 VMO positions in FSIS in January 1991:

	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Salary Range</u>	
	GS-9	18	\$25,717-33,430	
	GS-11	263	31,116-40,449	
	GS-12	719	37,294-48,481	
.....	GM-13	235	44,348-57,650
	GM-14	47	52,406-68,129	
	GM-15	14	61,643-80,138	
	SES	7	87,000-108,300	

Note: Employees in the New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles metropolitan areas also receive an 8 percent salary adjustment to help compensate for the high cost of living in these areas.

Inspection Operations

Inspection Operations (IO) oversees the inspection of domestically produced meat and poultry and is the largest employer of veterinarians in FSIS. Opportunities for VMO's can be found in most segments of IO.

Inspection Operations
Regions and Area Offices



- Area Office
- Regional Headquarters

Regional Operations: carries out inspection activities through a network of five regional offices, 26 area offices, and 188 inspection circuits. VMO positions are found at each level in Regional Operations.

At the inplant level, VMO's begin at the GS-9 or GS-11 level and can progress to the GS-11 or GS-12 level. Supervisory VMO's are GS-11's or GS-12's.

There are approximately 137 circuit supervisor positions held by veterinarians; these veterinarians are at the GM-13 level.

At present, 23 area supervisor positions are held by Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officers (SVMO's); these are at the GM-14 level, while VMO's in assistant area supervisor positions are GM-13's.

At the regional level, there are approximately three staff officer positions per region for VMO's at GM-13 level. They involve activities in the areas of residue control, poultry inspection, and red meat inspection. There are five deputy regional director positions at the GM-15 level and five regional director positions that are part of the Senior Executive Service (SES).



The remainder of VMO positions in IO are located in Washington, D.C. as staff officers or high-level managers. Most of these positions are found in the following programs:

Emergency Programs Staff: coordinates FSIS actions in response to residue, microbiological, and other contamination problems. When appropriate, this staff seeks voluntary recall by firms whose products are suspected of being adulterated or misbranded. This staff includes the Meatborne Hazard Control Center, which investigates reports of potential health hazards in meat and poultry products.

Federal-State Relations Staff: ensures that State inspection programs enforce requirements at least equal to those of Federal inspection and gives technical assistance to plants operating under the Talmadge-Aiken Act.

Residue Operations Staff: directs the Agency's in-plant residue monitoring programs and oversees product sampling for residue testing.

Slaughter Operations Staff: ensures that the slaughter of red meat and poultry is conducted properly and uniformly nationwide. This staff includes the new National Correlation Center in Ames, Iowa, which is charged with maintaining national uniformity in the inspection and disposition of diseased livestock and poultry. Five VMO's staff the new center.

The remaining two staffs in IO, the ***Processing Operations Staff*** and the ***Resource Management Staff***, do not have positions in the GS-701, VMO series. However, both staffs have positions for which some VMO's may qualify.

IO currently employs over 1,200 VMO's at the following grade levels:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number</u>
GS-9	18
GS-11	262
GS-12	709
GM-13	184
GM-14	30
GM-15	10
SES	7

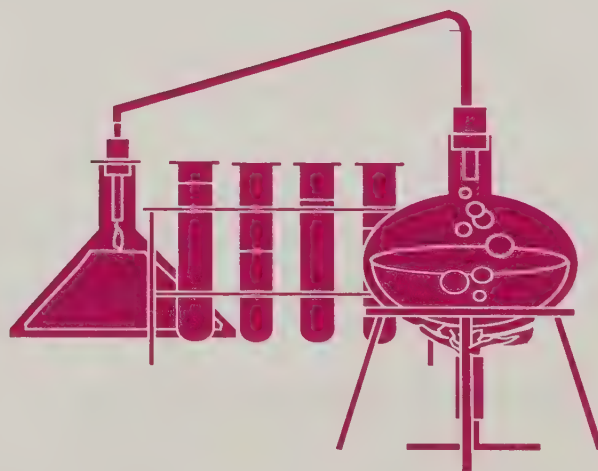
Science and Technology

The Science and Technology (S&T) Program provides scientific and technical support and guidance to the Agency's inspection programs. Opportunities exist in S&T for VMO's with additional experience in areas such as pathology, chemistry, and microbiology, although they may have to change job series for some of these positions. In fact, the practical in-plant experience of VMO's is of value in developing new technologies that have practical applications in the field. There also are several upper level management positions filled by individuals with veterinary backgrounds but classified under a non-VMO series. Except for laboratory positions, all of these positions are located in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

Technology Transfer and Coordination Staff: acquires, analyzes, and disseminates, within the Agency, scientific, technical, and industrial information pertinent to FSIS programs and the meat and poultry industry. The staff also evaluates rapid/onsite testing systems for use by the Agency and develops and implements the Agency's plan for regulating the products of biotechnology.

Pathology and Serology Division: develops the pathology and serology programs that support meat and poultry inspection. It provides laboratory services, studies infectious agents associated with food, and develops serological tests for infectious and toxic agents in meat and poultry products.

Chemistry Division: develops and improves practical analytical procedures for detecting adulterants and chemical residues in meat and poultry products. The division directs the performance of highly complex chemical analyses in field laboratories, coordinates the accredited laboratory program, and monitors chemistry field service laboratories to ensure quality and integrity of analytical results.



Microbiology Division: develops economical and efficient analytical screening methods for use in laboratories, in plants, and on farms. It also plans and maintains microbiological monitoring and surveillance programs and carries out special investigations into the safety and quality of products and processes.

Residue Evaluation and Planning Division: plans FSIS activities to control drugs and other chemical residues in meat and poultry products. This division develops an annual plan for sampling domestic meat and poultry products for residues and plans residue avoidance programs involving producers and plants.

Slaughter Inspection Standards and Procedures Division: develops regulations and standards for use in slaughtering plants. This division also develops, tests, and helps implement procedures for the ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of animals.

Technical Support Laboratories: provide analytical support for FSIS activities. The laboratories, which are located in Athens, Ga., St. Louis, Mo., and Alameda, Ca., each have several positions for veterinary pathologists at the GM-13 level.

Facilities, Equipment, and Sanitation Division: develops standards for plant facilities, equipment, and sanitation programs to help ensure sanitary and wholesome products. This division also reviews and approves drawings of and specifications for meat and poultry facilities and equipment before they can be used in federally inspected plants.

The **Processed Products Inspection Division**, the **Industrial Engineering and Ergonomics Staff**, and the **Statistics and Data Systems Division** generally do not hire VMO's.

S&T currently employs 44 VMO's at the following grade levels:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number</u>
GS-11	1
GS-12	6
GM-13	24
GM-14	10
GM-15	3



S&T also employs a number of individuals with veterinary backgrounds in other job series.

International Programs

International Programs (IP) ensures the wholesomeness of imported meat and poultry products and coordinates the inspection and certification of meat and poultry products for export. Most VMO positions in IP are concentrated in the Foreign Programs Division and the Export Coordination Division. IP is interested in VMO's who have a broad knowledge of inspection processes in the domestic program, since these form a basis for activities in the international area. Oral and written communication skills, as well as analytical capabilities, are important.

Foreign Programs Division:

ensures that meat and poultry imports have been produced under inspection systems equivalent to that of the United States. VMO's in this Division usually have a working title of Foreign Programs Officer. They are based in Washington, D.C., and travel overseas to review the effectiveness of each eligible country's inspection system controls.



Export Coordination Division: facilitates the export of U.S. meat and poultry products. VMO's in this division, who usually have a working title of Staff Officer, work with domestic industry to help them meet technical requirements of foreign countries and plan and coordinate reviews of U.S. plants by foreign officials. They also meet with foreign government officials about foreign country requirements that differ from those of the United States.

The **Import Inspection Division** and **Program Development Division** generally do not have VMO positions, although a few positions may exist from time to time.

IP currently employs 19 VMO's at the following grade levels:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number</u>
GM-13	14
GM-14	3
GM-15	2

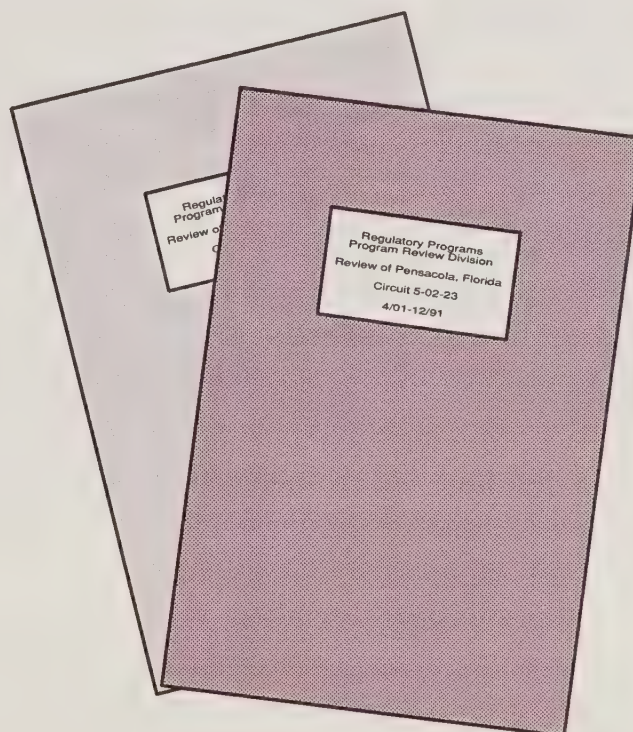
There may also be positions in IP filled by veterinarians but classified in series other than VMO GS-701.

Regulatory Programs

Regulatory Programs (RP) encompasses three major areas: Compliance Program; Labels, Standards, and Review Programs; and Program Management and Support Staff. Most positions for veterinarians are located in the Program Review Division.

Program Review Division:

Located in Lawrence, Kansas, the Program Review Division employs a mix of VMO's, food technologists, and food inspectors as Program Review Officers. These reviewers provide an overview of inspection effectiveness by conducting systematic, onsite reviews of domestic meat and poultry plants and facilities where imported meat and poultry are reinspected. They also conduct special reviews as requested and prepare summary reports. VMO's are not restricted to reviewing only slaughter functions; all reviewers evaluate a variety of program activities. Extensive traveling is involved.



Applicants with a broad inspection background, including experience in both red meat and poultry, are preferred. Since Program Review Officers are highly visible and interact with a variety of individuals, the ability to communicate—both orally and in writing—is critical. Applicants should be sure to emphasize in their applications any communication experience and accomplishments—including volunteer work.

RP employs seven VMO GM-701's at the GM-13 level, and several veterinarians as Program Analysis Officers or Program Analysts GM-343.

Administrative Management

The Administrative Management (AM) Program manages a number of administrative areas such as budget, personnel, and training. AM employs a number of VMO's in association with training activities.

The **Training and Development Division (TDD)**, with branches in Washington, D.C., and Texas, performs much of the developmental work involved in providing inspection training to veterinarians and food inspectors. This division designs courses presented at the FSIS Training Center (see below), Washington, D.C., and other sites, and coordinates on-site training for new employees.

Three branches, located in Texas, coordinate training in red meat, poultry, and processing inspection. The red meat and poultry branches are headed by VMO's and have VMO's on staff.

The **Donald L. Houston Center for Meat and Poultry Sciences**, at Texas A&M University in College Station, provides the actual classroom training for inspection personnel. A slaughter coordinator and three instructors, all of whom are VMO's, teach slaughter related courses. A processing coordinator and three processing instructors, who are not VMO's, teach processing-related courses.

VMO's interested in becoming instructors should emphasize experience and educational background in the areas they would like to teach and should exhibit good oral and written communication skills.

AM currently employs 13 VMO's at the following grade levels:

	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number</u>	
.....	GS-12	4
	GM-13	5	
	GM-14	4	



The Donald L. Houston Center for Meat and Poultry Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Part 2:
Career Tracks



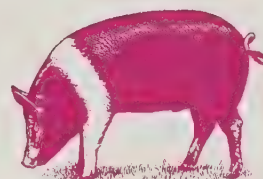
*"FSIS offers its veterinary workforce
a variety of career paths that are
both challenging and rewarding."*

Administrator, FSIS

Overview

In FSIS there are three major identifiable tracks or career paths that VMO's can pursue. These tracks are usually referred to as Line, Staff, and Scientific Support.

These tracks are certainly not "pure." Frequently, success in a chosen track requires movement between tracks. For example, it is becoming rare that a Regional Director position, a Line job, would be filled by someone who had not had at least one Staff assignment in Washington, D.C., at the GM-14 or GM-15 level. It is also possible for VMO's to qualify and move to other series such as Program Analysis Officer (GS-343) in Regulatory Programs. These moves can be promotions or reassignments (lateral moves).



In this guide, however, we primarily discuss how you can progress within the VMO job series in each of the three tracks. The guide does not discuss progression in other series that may include individuals with veterinary experience.

After a discussion of each career track, examples of FSIS employees who have followed that career track are included.

Line Positions

Line positions in FSIS are those directly concerned with accomplishing day-to-day inspection. Typically, Line positions are the most prevalent ones in an Agency and include managerial, supervisory and nonsupervisory jobs. All of the Line jobs in FSIS under the VMO series, which number over 1,100, are in IO.

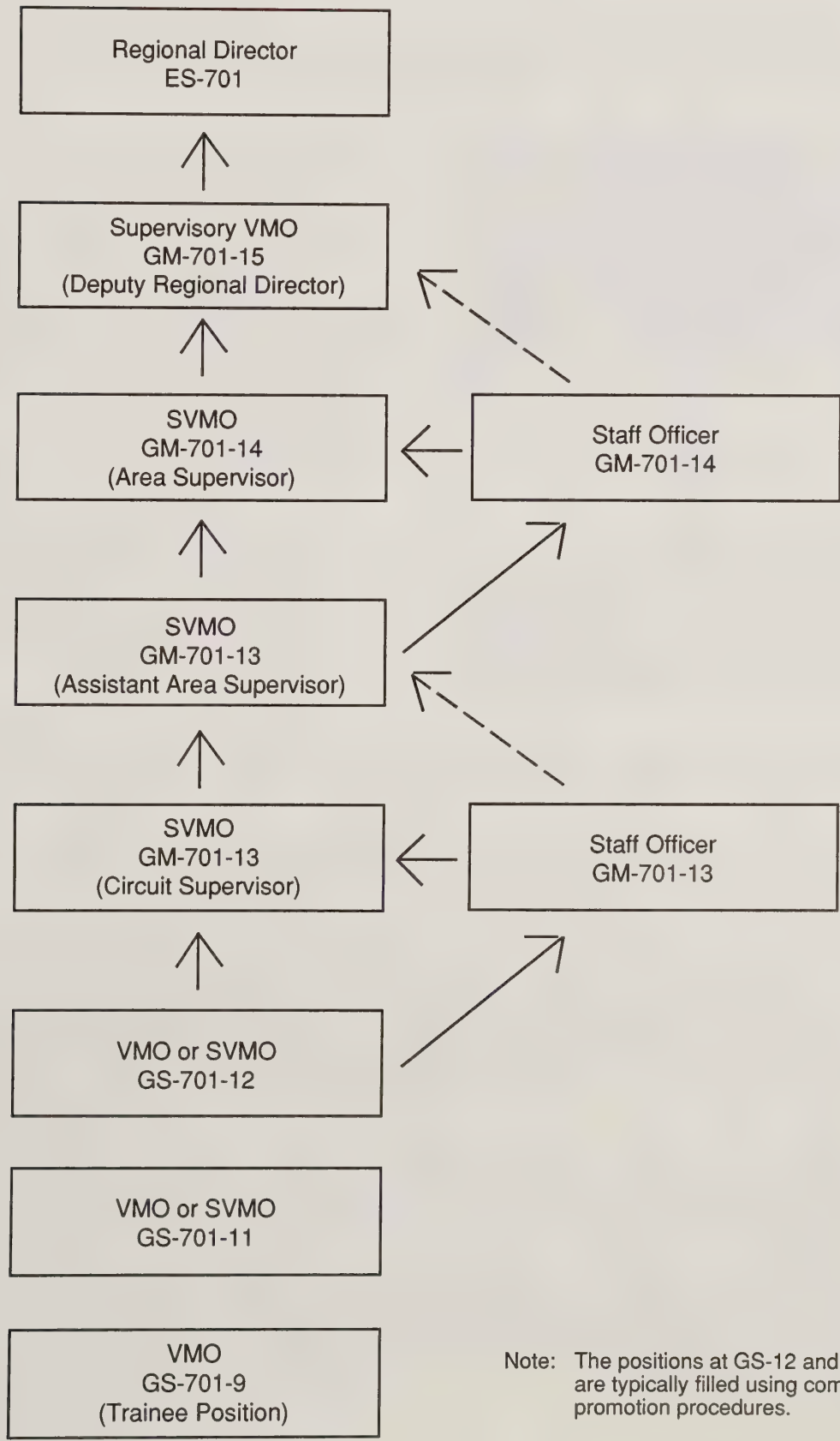
Although there may be some variations, the typical career track for a Line veterinarian is as shown on the opposite page.

Almost all of our positions at GS-12 and above are filled competitively. This means that if you are interested in progressing through this track you must submit an application and compete with others vying for the same Line position. A selecting official may also choose a noncompetitive candidate, such as someone interested in reinstatement, transfer, appointment from an Office of Personnel Management register, etc.

Recently, a decision was made to fill Regional Director, Deputy Regional Director, Area Supervisor, and Assistant Area Supervisor positions with either individuals qualified as Food Technologists or VMO's. Under the previous policy, only VMO's were considered for these positions, except for Area Supervisors and Assistant Area Supervisors in purely processing areas. Under this new policy, the positions will be classified in the series for which the selectee qualifies.



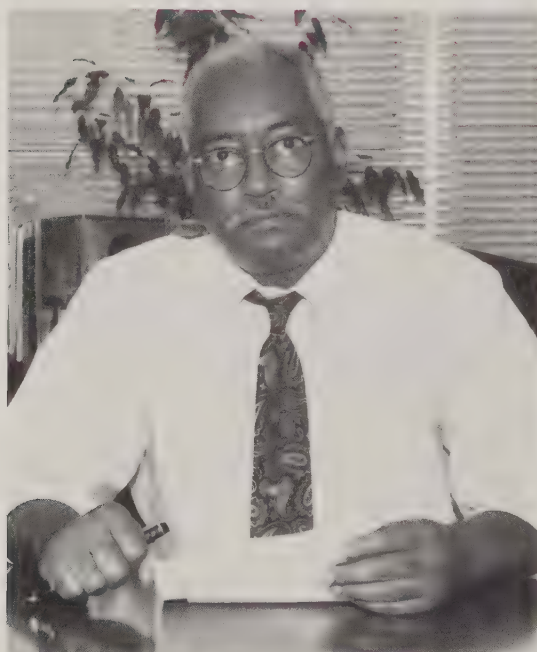
Line Career Track*



Note: The positions at GS-12 and above are typically filled using competitive promotion procedures.

Profiles

Dr. Donald White



"Know what is going on in the Agency in terms of philosophy and policies; understand the environment. Continue to improve your technical, supervisory, and managerial skills in order to assure a consistent quality product and effective management of human resources."

Current position and grade: Regional Director, Northeastern Region; Senior Executive Service, ES-701, Inspection Operations.

Background: Dr. White began his career with FSIS as an Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) and was promoted to positions as Circuit Supervisor, Assistant Area Supervisor, Area Supervisor, and Deputy Director of the Northeastern Region. He then was selected as executive assistant to the assistant deputy administrator for IO, a staff position at headquarters. He continued his career in Washington, D.C., as director of the Review and Evaluation Staff, whose functions are now divided between Regulatory Programs and the Policy Evaluation and Planning Staff. Dr. White has been Regional Director since 1989.

Dr. White holds a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Biology from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He received a D.V.M. degree from Tuskegee University and a Masters degree in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.

Current or special projects: Dr. White manages day-to-day operations for the Northeastern region. He has served on numerous task forces and committees during his FSIS career.

Dr. Loida Hernandez

Current position and grade: Assistant Area Supervisor, Raleigh, N.C., GM-701-13, Inspection Operations.

Background: Dr. Hernandez began her career with FSIS as an IIC. She was then promoted to circuit supervisor and then assistant area supervisor.

Dr. Hernandez received her DVM degree from the University of Havana in Cuba. She also holds a Masters degree in Public Health from the Public Health School of Mexico.

Current or special projects: Manages day-to-day operations for the Raleigh, N.C., area.

Throughout her career she has worked on a number of special projects. For instance, when FSIS began a modernization program in the late 1970's, she participated in the evaluation of Modified Traditional Inspection for poultry.

Dr. Hernandez also has served as an official trainer in her area for new veterinarians and food inspectors.

She was also featured in a public service announcement produced by FSIS.

She has accompanied foreign reviewers from Spanish-speaking countries to U.S. plants, serving as interpreter and technical expert.

"Be enthusiastic and proud of what you're doing. Don't think of it as just putting in your time. If you're apathetic, your employees will act that way, too.

"Learn how to use the team working concept. I've been using Total Quality Management principles my whole career, and they work.

"I believe the opportunities are here in FSIS to improve yourself and develop your career. Take advantage of them."

Staff Positions

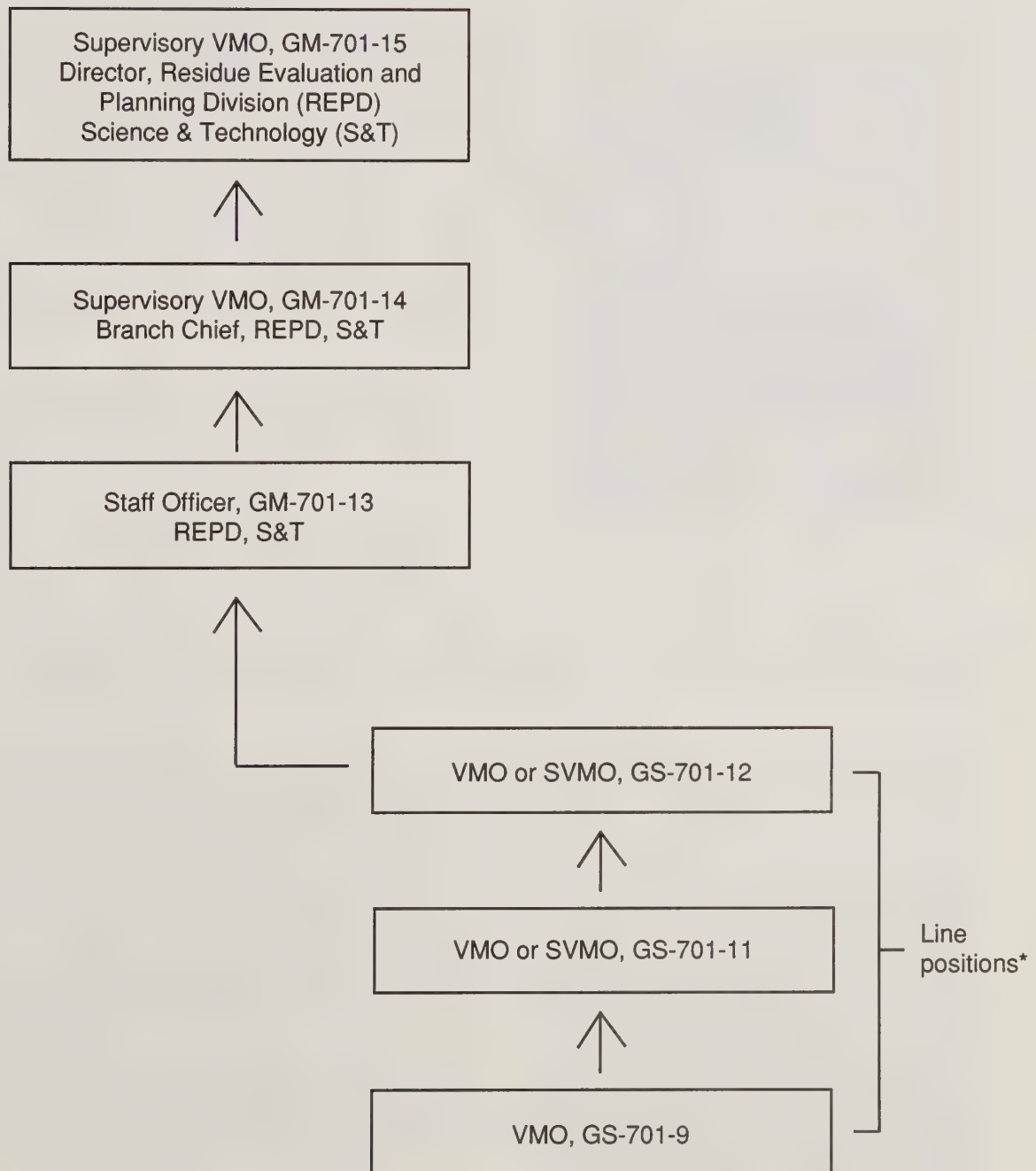
Staff veterinary positions in FSIS are those concerned with planning, regulatory development, advisory or administrative functions in support of inspection. This is the second largest career track for VMO's in the Agency. Currently, there are over 100 staff positions at headquarters and in the field. Such positions are located in Inspection Operations (45 positions), Science and Technology (26 positions), International Programs (19 positions), Regulatory Programs (7 positions) and Administrative Management (13 positions).

Typically, veterinarians join the Agency in a Line position at the grade GS-9 or GS-11 level in Inspection Operations. They usually make the transition to a staff position at the GS-12 or GM-13 grade levels. After serving for a year or two in a staff capacity, many of the employees successfully compete for supervisory positions in the Line track. Others choose to stay in staff positions.

A typical career progression for staff jobs is as shown on the opposite page.



Staff Career Track



*Employees start out in line positions.

Note: The positions at GS-12 and above are typically filled using competitive promotion procedures.

Profiles

Dr. Jill Hollingsworth



"Volunteer for task forces, even those not in your area of expertise. Not only does it give you a broader perspective on what's going on in the Agency, but it gives you a chance to see what others do. If you are a good contributor, the word gets around, and you get even more exposure."

"If your goal is to climb the ladder, working in Washington, D.C., is essential. I didn't think so when I was in the field, but after being here, I changed my mind."

Current position and grade: Assistant Director, HACCP Special Team (detail), GM-701-14.

Background: Dr. Hollingsworth began her career with FSIS as an IIC, moving to positions as Staff Officer for exports in the Southeastern regional office, and then Assistant Area Supervisor. She moved to Washington, D.C., to become National Poultry Correlator, a staff position in IO. She then became Director of the Slaughter Inspection Standards and Procedures Division before assuming her most recent position as Assistant Director of the HACCP Special Team.

Dr. Hollingsworth holds a D.V.M. degree from the University of Georgia in Athens.

Current or special projects: In her current position, she assists the Director of the HACCP Special Team in coordinating all headquarters activities and Special Team activities related to HACCP.

As Director of the Slaughter Inspection Standards and Procedures Division, she was involved in a number of key projects to modernize slaughter inspection, including the microbiological control project in Puerto Rico and the development and testing of SIS-Cattle. Throughout her FSIS career, she has served on a number of task forces.

Dr. Arshad Hussain

Current position and grade: Area Supervisor for North and South America, GM-701-14, International Programs.

Background: Dr. Hussain began his career with FSIS as a VMO and was promoted to IIC. He then became a Staff Officer with the Facilities, Equipment and Sanitation Division in Washington, D.C., where he reviewed and approved blueprints for slaughter plants. He switched series by becoming a Food Technologist with that Division's Sanitation Branch. After that, he worked for a short time as a Staff Officer in Inspection Operations. He then moved to International Programs as a Foreign Programs Officer (FPO), first stationed in Washington, D.C., and then in Germany (FPO's are no longer stationed overseas; all are based at headquarters). He was then promoted to his current position as Area Supervisor for North and South America.

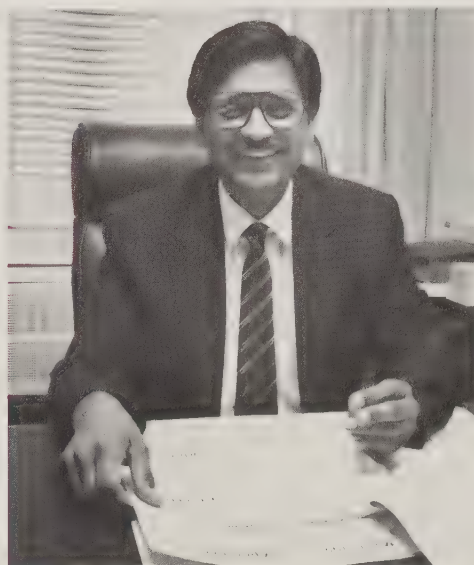
Dr. Hussain holds a D.V.M. degree from Punjab University in Pakistan, a Masters degree in Food Technology from Pakistan Agricultural University, and Masters and Ph.D. degrees in Microbiology from the University of Maryland in College Park.

Current or special projects: In his current position, Dr. Hussain reviews inspection systems in North and South American countries that export to the U.S. to determine if they are equal to the U.S. system. While with the Foreign Programs Division, he helped develop a booklet outlining Protein-Fat-Free (PFF) requirements for imported products and visited all countries exporting cured pork products to the U.S. to explain the new procedures.

While working for the Facilities, Equipment and Sanitation Division, he worked on projects involving work measurement and slaughter line speeds, approved water systems, and microbiological control and monitoring programs.

"Many of the jobs I accepted were for the experience, not the grade. Promotions are not nearly as satisfying as having a job you enjoy that will give you important experience."

"I still occasionally go to school to take a course here and there--in subjects such as basic chemistry and computers. Going back to school keeps you in the reading and knowledge mode."



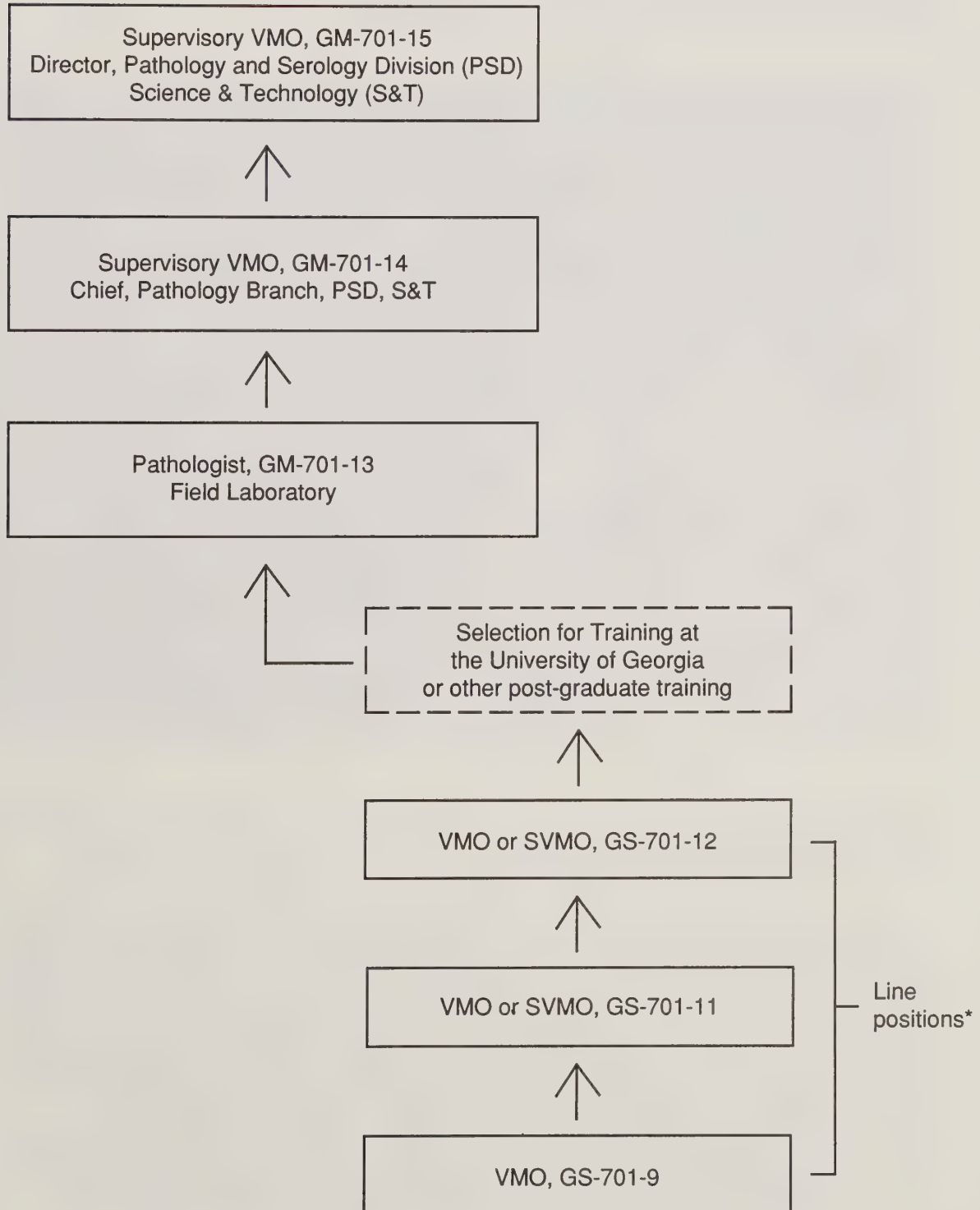
Scientific Support Positions

The Scientific Support category or track of VMO's is the smallest of the three career groupings. There are approximately 18 positions in this track, all of which are located in Science and Technology. These positions include the pathologists who perform a variety of laboratory analyses. As with the Staff track, individuals in Scientific Support typically start out their careers in FSIS line positions. Usually, at the GS-12 or GM-13 level they convert to Scientific Support, either by being competitively selected for a post-graduate training program or by virtue of their background in pathology or other scientific field.

A typical career progression in this track is as shown on the opposite page.



Scientific Support Career Track



*Employees start out in line positions.

Note: The positions at GS-12 and above are typically filled using competitive promotion procedures.

Profile

Dr. Patrick McCaskey



Current position and grade: Director of Pathology and Serology Staff, Beltsville, MD; GM-701-15, Science and Technology.

Background: Dr. McCaskey started as a GS-9 VMO in a cattle slaughter facility, progressing to GS-11. In 1980, he was selected for an FSIS-sponsored two-year pathology training program at the University of Georgia in Athens. After earning a masters degree in pathology through that program, he spent 5 years as a staff pathologist at the FSIS Eastern Laboratory in Athens, Ga. During that time he became certified as a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists. In 1987, he moved to Washington, D.C., serving first as a staff officer in the Agency's Pathology Branch, then as chief of that branch. In August 1990 he was promoted to his current position, director of the Pathology and Serology Division.

Dr. McCaskey received a D.V.M. degree from the University of Minnesota, and a Masters degree in Pathology from the University of Georgia. He is board certified as a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists.

Current and special projects: Dr. McCaskey is currently working on a pathology survey of condemned swine carcasses in response to the 1985 National Academy of Sciences' study. The study recommended that FSIS determine which specific disease processes are found in animals presented for slaughter. He is also working on rapid diagnostic tests to assist VMO's in making dispositions and a rapid test to detect icterus (jaundice).

While working at the Athens, Ga., laboratory, he volunteered to be the contracting officer for a major research project designed to determine whether consuming mechanically separated product would cause gastrointestinal lesions in rats.

Dr. McCaskey is a great supporter of continuing education in the field of pathology for in-plant veterinarians. He conducts regular pathology lectures for VMO's around the country.

“Be motivated, self-starting, and always strive towards excellence. Demonstrate patience, level headedness, and an ability to work well with individuals from all walks of life. Recognize what the Agency needs and find ways to meet those needs. Remember that education in veterinary medicine must not cease upon obtaining a DVM degree.”

Supervisory and Managerial Positions

"Most VMO's are supervisors as well as technical experts, so good supervisory skills cannot be overemphasized. The VMO who can excel in this area will certainly be in a better position to move up in the organization."

*Wilson Horne, Deputy Administrator
Inspection Operations*

Over 75 percent of the VMO positions in the Agency are supervisory or managerial. With the exception of certain official personnel actions and certifying responsibilities, the duties of supervisors and managers tend to be fairly similar from grade to grade. Higher level supervisors and managers are more likely to have responsibility for a greater scope of activities. In addition, they are also expected to possess more interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. When filling these positions, the following are considered:

- **human resource management** - To what extent does this individual meet and deal with employees and peers in a fair and effective manner, thus promoting or improving interpersonal relationships, team efforts, and morale?
- **flexibility** - To what extent does this individual adapt his or her behavior and ideas in response to various people and various conditions to reach a desired goal?
- **influencing others** - To what extent can this individual persuade others to do something or adopt a point of view in order to produce desired results?

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- **teambuilding** - To what extent does this individual engage and work collaboratively with other members of a group so that others are involved in the process and outcome?
 - **oral communication** - To what extent does this individual effectively obtain and give information orally?
 - **written communication** - To what extent does this individual effectively and persuasively convey information in writing?
 - **organizing and planning** - To what extent does this individual effectively lay out his or her own work or the work of others, anticipate contingencies, coordinate resources, and see activities through to completion?
 - **problem solving** - To what extent does this individual gather the data, perform the analysis needed, and select a supportable course of action for a problem or a situation?
 - **innovating** - To what extent does this individual generate new or creative ideas or solutions and use available resources in new or more efficient ways?
 - **stress tolerance** - To what extent does this individual maintain a consistent level of performance under the stress of confrontation, tight timeframes, or uncertainty?

Summary

Early in your career, typically at the GS-11 or GS-12 level, you must decide what track you want to pursue and then work toward that goal by applying for appropriate vacancies. You should also remember, however, that we have many fine employees in FSIS who are comfortable remaining as a VMO GS-701-11 or SVMO GS-12 in the plant. They have no desire to relocate to obtain a higher graded job in the organization. Others are interested in working in other fields and choose to switch to other series such as Program Analyst.

For those of you who do have a strong desire to get ahead in the VMO occupation and are willing to relocate, you should bear in mind that being successful is similar to a running back's job in football. It is great to have a specific goal in mind that you are running toward. But you also have to keep your eyes on the ball at all times. If you take your eyes off the ball, chances are quite good that you will not catch it and will not run across that goal line and score the points. In other words, in your desire to get ahead, you cannot forget about doing your best in your present job.

Part 3: Training and Development



“The 1990’s will be an era of change for FSIS. Our employees will be asked to perform new tasks and to perform old tasks in new ways. They will need to upgrade and expand existing skills and learn new ones. The most successful employees will be those who enjoy learning and who view change as an opportunity.”

*Ronald J. Prucha
Acting Administrator*

Overview

VMO’s receive intensive training at Texas A&M and in plants when they join FSIS. But education and training don’t stop there. FSIS has a well-deserved reputation as a trendsetter when it comes to professional development. Opportunities abound for employees who want to learn.

The vast majority of veterinarians who have been promoted recognize the importance of, and have been involved in, continued professional growth and development. Many veterinarians have sought continuing education from outside sources, but many have also benefited from agency-sponsored training. FSIS-sponsored training programs are announced periodically. Some programs that have proven to be extremely beneficial to our veterinary staff include the following:

Executive and Managerial Development Program

This program was designed to assist the Agency in identifying high potential employees interested in pursuing a career in FSIS management. The Agency’s goal is to have a cadre of highly skilled and motivated employees to compete for managerial positions.

The program is recommended for veterinarians and others in grades GM-13 through GM-15 regardless of which track they are pursuing. The program, which involves intensive training designed to develop and refine managerial skills, has three distinct phases.

1. Identify and Assess High Potential Employees

Forty FSIS employees in grades GM-13 and 14 are competitively selected through the use of applications, assessment center results, and review panel comments. Twenty mentors in grades GM-14 and 15 assist selectees by coaching, advising, counseling and providing opportunities to participate in activities under their direction.

2. Provide Training in Management Skills

Participants attend three one-week sessions over a one- to two-year period in such areas as communication, problem solving, organization and planning, team building, and conflict resolution.

3. Encourage and Facilitate Self-Development

During the course of the program, participants will be required to pursue a study topic of value to the Agency and the participant.

Frontline Leadership

This program, designed and developed by Zenger-Miller, a leading private training institution, is founded on research that identified certain key leadership skills needed by employees of all levels. Included among the courses are:

- Core Interpersonal Skills (4 full days)
- Developing Individual Performance (4 half days)
- Managing Change and Innovation (3 half days)

This program is beneficial regardless of which career track an employee is pursuing. It is offered at both headquarters and field locations.

Career Development Academy (CDA)

This is a new program open to all permanent employees in grades 5 through 12. It is designed to promote employee growth, to provide the opportunity for renewed career counseling, and to foster an understanding of FSIS' missions and goals. The 40 competitively selected participants attend two one-week sessions over a one-to



two-year period covering such topics as self-assessment, decision making, goal setting, effective writing, and managing change. This program is beneficial regardless of which career track an employee is pursuing.

Advanced Training in Science and Technology

This program offers qualified Agency employees with a veterinary medical or other scientific background the opportunity to pursue post-graduate education in a scientific discipline in which they have an interest and which is compatible with the needs of Science and Technology (S&T). After being competitively selected, participants are reassigned to a temporary position of equal grade and salary within S&T in Washington, DC. Participants are then sent to the University of Georgia, Athens, and/or Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, during the first phase of the assignment. This phase consists of post-graduate scientific education in chemistry, information resource management, microbiology, or biotechnology. The plan may also include practical work or research in Washington, D.C., or one or more of the three field laboratories.

Upon completion, participants are reassigned to a permanent position in Washington, DC, or one of the S&T field laboratories based on the division's needs. S&T pays all tuition, travel, residency, salary and related costs of this program.

This program is designed for employees pursuing the scientific support track.

Science Pathology Training Program

This is a three-year program at the University of Georgia designed to prepare competitively selected participants to become board-certified pathologists. Two years are devoted to extensive academic work, and the third year is devoted primarily to research. This program is designed for employees pursuing the scientific support track.

Continuing Education

This is one of the most popular and widely used training programs in FSIS. By following procedures for obtaining advance approval, employees can receive reimbursement for tuition and materials for educational or training experiences they pursue on their own. This program can be personally tailored to meet anyone's needs, regardless of which career track he or she is pursuing. Funding for this program varies from year to year.

Part 4: Enhancing Your Chances for Promotion

“Employees have to assume responsibility for improving their marketability. In this way they can help ensure they will be among the best qualified candidates for promotion opportunities”

*William Hudnall, Deputy Administrator
Administrative Management*

In the previous sections of this pamphlet we have explained where the various VMO positions are located in the organization and how progression through the three major VMO tracks in FSIS typically proceeds. In this section we will discuss what steps you can personally take to chart your career path in the agency.

Variety of Experience

Almost every VMO promoted above the GS-12 level has one thing in common—each has had a variety of experience obtained through different types of assignments. This variety does not simply happen. The individuals in this Agency who are viewed as the true “success” stories have been instrumental in shaping that success by seeking various assignments. If you want to progress you have to look for opportunities to improve your credentials in terms of the Agency’s needs. Some examples of the types of assignments that can enhance your success in the Agency include the following:

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- Working in both large and small plants
 - Working in difficult assignments (e.g., plants with antiquated facilities, difficult plant management, high pathology)
 - Assignments involving various species of animals
 - Assignments involving several different supervisors
 - Line and staff experience
 - Laboratory experience
 - Previous state or military inspection experience
 - Teaching experience obtained at the FSIS Training Center or as an in-plant trainer
 - Task force participation and leadership
 - Experience as a supervisor

In other words, not only is variety the spice of life, but for FSIS veterinarians, it is the quintessential ingredient needed to shape a successful career.

Mobility

Variety of experience and geographic mobility go hand-in-hand in FSIS. To obtain the variety of experience described above, you must also be mobile. Progression to the GM-14 and above grade levels typically requires line assignments in the field as well as at least one staff assignment at headquarters in Washington, D.C. If you have your sights set on a GM-13 or higher position, then you must be prepared to relocate during your career.

Visibility

Some individuals improve their chances for promotion when they are given the opportunity to meet with and showcase their skills for Agency managers. This type of visibility may occur in a variety of ways and in most cases also provides the opportunity to improve communication skills. The following are examples of some of these types of activities:

- Task force member
- Ad hoc committee member on new inspection procedures
- EEO counselor or advisory committee member
- Administrator's representative for formal EEO complaints
- Regional investigator
- Oral conference officer
- Member of labor management negotiating team
- VMO recruiter
- Mentor or participant in one of the Agency's career development programs
- Membership in professional societies and associations

Part 5: Putting Your Best Foot Forward

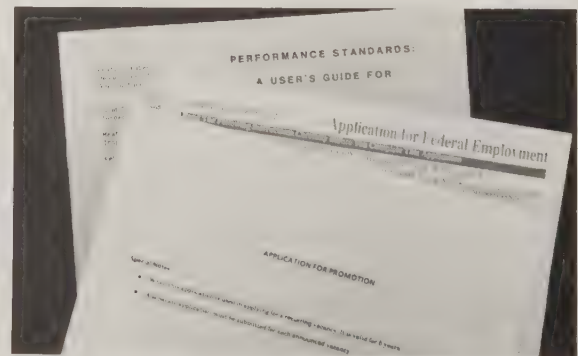
“Your promotion application is extremely important. It is the first thing a supervisor looks at when considering someone for competitive advancement.”

*Bert Bigelow, Director
Personnel Division*

Promotion Application

Nothing opens or shuts the door to advancement more quickly than your application for promotion. Well done applications create a good first impression. Ones that are poorly done are a chore to assess. As a result, a selecting official may overlook important experience simply because the application is such a challenge to read!

When preparing your application for promotion keep the hints on the opposite page in mind.



Performance Appraisal

Certainly there is no method of performance appraisal that is free from human error or errors due to lack of precision in using various appraisal tools. However, despite the inherent problems in any system that has to rely on judgment, your supervisor's assessment of how you perform your present job is one of the best indicators we have for determining how well you might perform in another position. Therefore, performance appraisals must be taken seriously!

Your annual performance appraisal weighs heavily when assessing you for promotion. Therefore, you should work cooperatively with your immediate supervisor to ensure that your appraisal is a realistic assessment of your job performance.

Do	Don't
<p>Be sure to use a current SF-171 (Application for a Federal Position) or the FSIS Form 4335-1, dated 8/90 (Application for Promotion) when applying for a position in FSIS. Read the vacancy announcement carefully to see which forms are required.</p> <p>Tailor your responses to the job elements so they fit the job being announced.</p> <p>Describe your experience in a way that highlights the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the vacant position.</p> <p>Use active verbs when describing your experience. Be specific and concise!</p> <p>Keep experience and responses to job elements brief.</p> <p>Use your own words when completing experience blocks.</p> <p>Include all experience, whether paid or volunteer.</p> <p>Arrange your experience in chronological order.</p> <p>Print or type your application. If you reproduce your application on a computer, be sure all sections conform with the required forms.</p> <p>Make sure every word is legible. Sign and date the application.</p> <p>If you reproduce your application, make sure every page is in the proper order and readable.</p> <p>Submit your most current (no more than 15 months old) performance appraisal.</p> <p>Prepare and submit your application to the Servicing Personnel Office by the specified deadline.</p>	<p>Don't use an obsolete form. If the form is not <u>current</u>, the Servicing Personnel Office can eliminate it from competition.</p> <p>Don't use the same application for unrelated jobs. This gives the appearance you don't care.</p> <p>Don't exaggerate but don't be humble, either. Let your application reflect your true background and accomplishments.</p> <p>Don't use attachments such as position descriptions or school transcripts, unless <u>specifically</u> requested. However, do take transcripts and award commendations with you to an interview.</p> <p>Do not use more than one continuation sheet for each job element. Additional pages are discarded!</p> <p>Don't quote from position descriptions.</p> <p>Don't omit church, community or club work.</p> <p>Don't have an application that is hard to read or confusing to follow.</p> <p>Don't submit a messy application.</p> <p>Don't make your application a challenge to read. Hard-to-read applications do not usually make the "best qualified" category.</p> <p>Don't expect the Personnel Office to organize your application for you.</p> <p>Don't send an outdated performance appraisal. This can disqualify you for the job.</p> <p>Don't procrastinate. If your application is not received by the closing date on the vacancy announcement, it will not be considered.</p> <p>Do not use Government postage paid envelopes or Government FAX machines. Such use is prohibited, and your application will not be considered.</p>

(Adapted from list of do's and don'ts prepared by Carol A. Watkins)



P.S. ... What Next?

I hope you have found the advice in this career planning guide to be helpful. I wish this information had been available when I came up through the ranks.

Although we have laid out a career planning strategy in one neat package, we know things don't always run smoothly or as planned. That is why it is important to seek advice when the career choices are not so neat and tidy, or when you believe another opinion would be helpful.

The best advice I can give you is to find a mentor—a wise and trusted counselor—early in your career. It doesn't have to be one person, it can be several. It doesn't even have to be a fellow veterinarian. But choose someone whom you respect and who has had a successful career, because that person would be most able to suggest different types of assignments and training that would be helpful. Also, choose someone who can start you thinking, not someone who wants to tell you exactly what to do. After all, it's your career, and you can't pattern your life after someone else's!

Opportunities for veterinarians in FSIS certainly have changed. Many new opportunities are available for veterinarians who are willing to gain new skills and broaden their perspective. At the same time, many positions traditionally filled by veterinarians are now also being filled by other professionals. Opportunities abound in FSIS, and the future belongs to those employees willing to accept the challenges.

Good luck!

W. S. Horne, DVM
Deputy Administrator
Inspection Operations

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